

IN THE NEWS
Israel asks U.S. for Galilee, Negev aid

Israel asked the United States for assistance in developing the Negev and Galilee.

Shimon Peres, Israel's deputy prime minister, presented the request Thursday to Vice President Dick Cheney.

Israel plans to resettle thousands of settlers scheduled to be evacuated from the Gaza Strip this summer in those regions.

Peres said Israel would not request direct U.S. aid for the resettlement, but needed money to create employment and educational opportunities in areas likely to absorb the settlers.

Cheney was receptive, Peres said, and now Israel is preparing a financial proposal.

White supremacist gets 40 years for plot

A white supremacist convicted of plotting to assassinate a judge was sentenced to 40 years in jail. Matthew Hale was found guilty this week of soliciting an FBI informant to kill Joan Lefkowitz.

Hale had been charged with soliciting Lefkowitz's murder because she had ordered him to stop using the name World Church of the Creator, which had been trademarked by an Oregon-based religious group with no ties to Hale.

On Feb. 28, Lefkowitz's mother and husband were killed by a man unconnected to Hale.

Shelling of Sderot resumes

Palestinians fired a rocket from the Gaza Strip into Israel for the first time in two months. No one was hurt in Thursday's attack on the Negev town of Sderot.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility, but Israeli officials blamed the Popular Resistance Committees, a Gaza terrorist group that spurned an internal Palestinian truce called in mid-February.

Israeli Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz demanded that Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas punish the culprits.

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WORLD REPORT

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Ian Wagreich

Shimon Peres, left, makes a point as Mohammed Dahlan looks on at the Aspen Institute conference on Wednesday.

Washington parley produces plan for cooperation on disengagement

By **RON KAMPEAS**

WASHINGTON (JTA) — In a seventh-floor boardroom overlooking Washington's busy Dupont Circle, three Israelis and two Palestinians asked the American to leave.

Two hours later, they had come up with a formula that they hope will keep Israel's Gaza Strip withdrawal, planned to begin July 20, from ending in bloodshed and chaos.

That success was accompanied by news that the U.S. Senate is set to approve \$200 million in unconditional aid to the Palestinians.

The presence of top Israeli and Palestin-

ian officials Wednesday at an Aspen Institute conference on investment in Gaza launched the crucial first step in making sure the withdrawal goes smoothly.

Until now, months of efforts toward an agreement to cooperate have been dogged by mutual distrust and an unwillingness by either side to take the first step.

"This cooperation, which will start very, very soon, will change the whole character of disengagement," said Ephraim Sneh, a legislator in Israel's ruling coalition and one of the Israelis who struck the deal at the conference.

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**BEHIND
THE
HEADLINES**

■ *Israelis and Palestinians begin to plan together at Aspen Institute*

Continued from page 1

Late Wednesday morning, Sneh and others — Giora Eiland, the head of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's National Security Council; Amnon Lipkin Shahak, a former Israeli Cabinet minister and army chief of staff; Hind Khoury, the Palestinian Authority minister of state; and Mohamed Dahlan, the P.A.'s civil affairs minister — asked the think tank's president, Walter Isaacson, to find something else to do. Isaacson made sure the room was stocked with sandwiches and beverages, and left.

"When there is a strong political will on both sides, there is no need for a third party," Sneh said.

The agreement includes coordination committees to handle border crossings, transportation, trade and ports. It comes before a summit scheduled to take place Monday between Sharon and President Bush at Bush's Texas ranch.

The World Bank drew up a 12-point blueprint for the transfer in December, one that both sides agreed works — but the crucial first step, in which Israel gives the Palestinians a list of assets to be evacuated, has yet to happen. That now should come within days.

Dahlan, who is the top Palestinian official handling the pullout, said the Palestinian Authority would do all it could to make withdrawal easy for Israel, adding that he confirmed Wednesday's deal by phone with P.A. President Mahmoud Abbas.

"We will coordinate in every way the Israelis like and the international community likes," Dahlan said.

Despite the breakthrough, however, considerable skepticism remained on both sides, dampening much of the enthusiasm at the conference.

Eiland said the Palestinians still appeared to be winging it.

"Where exactly do they plan new neighborhoods, industrial zones?" he asked. "Some comprehensive plan for the future of Gaza has to be made."

Dahlan elicited a gasp from a hall full of diplomats, U.S. legislators and major donors when he raised the specter of violence if the Palestinians feel they're receiving insufficient peace dividends.

"If the withdrawal is going to be the way Sharon is saying, there will be a third intifada," he said.

Even on the dais, discussing the new agreement, participants interrupted one another over whether the Palestinians should rebuild their airport, which Israel regards as a security risk.

Israel, which still distrusts the Palestinian Authority, had held out hope until now that a third party would assume control of evacuated settlements.

Palestinians were reluctant to work with Israel, frustrated by what they saw as Israeli slowness in fulfilling commitments made at a February summit between Abbas and Sharon in the Egyptian resort of Sharm el-Sheik.

The upshot of the uncertainty is that Abbas, who was to meet with Bush before Sharon, has yet to set a date for a Washington visit. Abbas is concerned that if he comes away from a meeting with little to show for it, his relatively moderate allies will be crushed by extremists in July legislative elections.

There is some sympathy for that view in the administration. Bush plans to raise with Sharon the Israeli plan to add 3,500 apartments to the West Bank settlement and Jerusalem bedroom community of Ma'aleh Adumim.

"The 'road map' calls for no expansion of the settlements," Bush said Tuesday, referring to the U.S.-driven peace plan.

Bush's toughness on settlement expansion is not an about-face: He is sticking to his historic concessions last year reject-

ing any demand that Palestinian refugees be allowed to return to Israel, and accepting the reality that Israel will keep large settlements like Ma'aleh Adumim.

He is set to repeat those assurances at his Crawford summit with Sharon, as well as his demand that Palestinians meet their central road-map commitment to dismantle terrorist groups.

But Bush also is under pressure to revive alliances with Europe to tackle instability in Iraq and over the prospect of a nuclear Iran, and wants to see rapid progress toward Israeli-Palestinian peace.

To that end, Bush has pressed Congress hard to approve \$200 million in immediate aid to the Palestinians. The Senate is about to approve the funds, though it will urge that the money go to projects run by nongovernmental organizations and not directly to the Palestinian Authority.

Still, the Senate bill restores the president's prerogative to waive existing laws banning direct aid to the Palestinian Authority; a House of Representatives' version that passed last month removed the waiver. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has suggested that the president would prefer to send some money directly to the Palestinian Authority, and the waiver is likely to survive the Senate-House conference.

The bill, which the Senate Appropriations Committee referred to the full Senate this week, also requires two spending reports from Bush in the next six months.

The committee also passed an amendment to the bill, proposed by Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), that allows the State Department to transfer an additional \$10 million in available aid through the Overseas Private Investment Corp.

Feinstein — an Aspen Institute board member who initiated this week's conference and cajoled leaders from both sides to attend — said the \$10 million could leverage as much as \$116 million in private investment.

The Aspen Institute conference outlined five Gaza investment projects to be launched by the end of the year: a desalinization power plant; a communications center; a hospital; a housing company, and a uniform manufacturer.

'When there is a strong political will on both sides, there is no need for a third party.'

Ephraim Sneh
Israeli legislator

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Congress presses Russia to return Lubavitch books

By MATTHEW E. BERGER

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Pressure is mounting in the United States for the Russian government to return a collection of books to the Chabad-Lubavitch movement.

A month after all 100 U.S. senators urged Russian President Vladimir Putin to release the “Schneerson Collection,” a congressional committee explored the collection’s significance and the efforts to bring it to the United States.

At Wednesday’s hearing of the Helsinki Commission, Chabad rabbis and human rights leaders said Russia’s refusal to give a book collection to American Jews is a violation of international law. The rabbis said the Putin government should give the Schneerson collection of books and documents to the organization’s headquarters in New York.

“To us, their value is not about art and perhaps not even sanctity, but family,” said Rabbi Yehuda Krinsky, chairman of Chabad’s social services and educational organizations. “These books are like human beings. They give life to life.”

Ambassador Edward O’Donnell, the State Department’s envoy for Holocaust issues, said U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice will raise the issue with Russian officials when she travels to Moscow later this month.

Even as U.S. lawmakers pay increasing attention to the issue, it is also causing some disagreement between Lubavitch leaders in the United States, who are pushing to have the books returned, and those in Russia, who don’t want to jeopardize their close relations with the Kremlin.

There’s obvious frustration among some Lubavitch leaders in the United States, who have garnered near-unanimous support from American officials but have made only the slightest progress with the Russians. The hope is that increased publicity about the case will pressure the Putin government to release the collection.

“It is an opportunity to educate and to highlight this struggle and the history of these books in a way that has not been approached as yet,” said Rabbi Chanim Cunin, spokesman for the West Coast Chabad Lubavitch, which is leading the effort.

The Schneerson collection contains about 12,000 volumes seized from the fifth

Lubavitcher rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson, as part of a crackdown on religion a few years after the Russian Revolution.

Thirty books were given to the Lubavitch movement in Russia in 2002 from the Russian State Library, formerly known as the Lenin Library, where the collection has been held for the past 80 years.

There was hope at the time that more of the books would be released. Despite assurances, however, the remaining volumes in the library have not been released.

Last November, the Lubavitch movement in California filed suit in a U.S. court against the Russian Federation, the Russian Ministry of Culture and Mass Communication, the Russian State Library and the Russian State Military Archive.

A 1991 ruling by the Russian Supreme Court found that the collection was Chabad property, but Russian officials contend that the books are Russian property and will be taken overseas if they’re given to Chabad.

Chabad leaders indeed want to bring the collection to New York, where the books can be studied at Lubavitch headquarters. There was hope that the Putin government would hand them over, but these hopes have waned recently. As frustration has grown, the lobbying campaign has resumed.

The goal now is to retrieve the collection before Russia’s May celebration of the 60th anniversary of Nazi Germany’s surrender in World War II. Cunin said the collection includes personal tales that document Soviet oppression of Schneerson and his followers, as well as Nazi atrocities in Poland.

An official with the Russian Ministry of Culture said he wasn’t aware of any plan to have the Schneerson books transferred to the Lubavitch movement in the United States.

“At present, this is not being discussed,” said the official, who spoke to JTA on condition of anonymity. “There is no Russian law that would make such transfer legal. Should the government tell us to have the books transferred, we will have to obey. But I doubt this will ever happen.”

In September 2003 the Russian State Library opened a new Jewish book room, partly to make it easier for readers to use books from the Lubavitch collection.

Chabad-Lubavitch was outraged, saying Russia should not have opened the collection to the public until the books had been returned to Jewish control.

Lubavitch officials in Russia are divided over the issue. Spearheading the effort to have the books returned to New York is Rabbi Yitzhak Kogan, a Moscow representative of Agudas Chasidei Chabad-Lubavitch

of the Former Soviet Union. That group was appointed by the last Lubavitcher rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, with the goal of freeing the books.

But some Lubavitch leaders in Russia say the issue is more nuanced. The issue has put Rabbi Berel Lazar, the leading Chabad official in Russia and one of the country’s two chief rabbis — who is known for his good ties to the Kremlin — in an awkward situation.

Reluctant to irritate the Kremlin, Lazar’s Federation of Jewish Communities in Russia advocated transferring the books not to the United States but to the federation’s main facility in Moscow — a proposal that outraged Rabbi Shlomo Cunin, Chanim Cunin’s father, and his supporters.

A spokesman for the Federation of Jewish Communities told JTA that the question of justice in the case is not simple.

“The issue should be resolved in a lawful manner, in full accord with Russian legislation,” Boruch Gorin said. “And here is the main question: What would be considered lawful in this situation?”

Some insist Russia had no legal grounds to hold the books because Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson simply left them for temporary storage at a warehouse in Moscow when he left the Soviet Union decades ago.

These people argue that the collection, along with other books from the warehouse, was nationalized when Schneerson was living abroad.

In post-Communist years, Russia failed to adopt comprehensive legislation on the restitution of former private property, including cultural assets.

(JTA correspondent Lev Krichevsky in Moscow contributed to this report.)

‘These books are like human beings. They give life to life.’

Rabbi Yehuda Krinsky

Chabad official

FOCUS
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ISSUES

Russian Jewish schools build identity

By LEV KRICHEVSKY

ST. PETERSBURG, Russia (JTA) — On a bulletin board at a Jewish school for boys in St. Petersburg, one large-print announcement catches the eye: “Registration for brit milah at the principal’s office is open 24 hours,” it says, inviting students to undergo circumcision.

A few dozen young boys wearing yarmulkes run around the school. The sign indicates the ongoing mission of Jewish schools across the former Soviet Union — to bring young Jews closer to Judaism and help fill the void that communism and assimilation left in the generations of their parents and grandparents.

“Most of our kids cannot get any Jewish education in their families or in the community,” says Grigoriy Lipman, the principal of Moscow Jewish Day School No. 1311.

“We may try to educate their parents, but by and large the students still can’t get much of Judaism beyond the school walls.”

The emergence of Jewish day schools in the former Soviet Union is one of the more remarkable stories of a Jewish revival in countries long hampered by anti-Jewish restrictions.

Though only a small percentage of Jewish children attend Jewish schools, the region has witnessed a virtual explosion in the number of Jewish day schools, particularly over the last several years.

In 1991, when the Soviet Union collapsed, there were only six Jewish day schools in

the former Soviet republics, all created in the year or two before the fall of communism, when Mikhail Gorbachev’s perestroika loosened restrictions on Jewish activities.

Today, across the former USSR, there are nearly 100 Jewish schools with a total enrollment of some 15,000 elementary- and secondary-school students — some of them non-Jews attracted by the schools’ reputations.

While the size of Jewish population in these countries has shrunk over the last 15 years, several new schools open each year.

Most of the day schools in the area work under the auspices of Jewish religious groups, but they tend to be strong in general studies as well.

“Jewish education should not be only about tradition and the Torah, it should always be a high-level education,” says Meir Sheyner, a Chabad rabbi involved in several day schools in the Central Asian republic of Kazakhstan.

The Or Avner School in the Ukrainian city of Dneprodzerzhinsk is typical of the smaller Jewish day schools in the former Soviet Union.

The school has grown from 56 to 150 students, and hopes to expand further.

“I think we still have many kids of school age in our town who have yet to come to our school,” says Dmitriy Tarnopolsky, the chairman of the Jewish community in this industrial center of 300,000 people in eastern Ukraine.

Community leaders and parents agree that Jewish schools provide a valuable way of fostering Jewish family life and values among the largely assimilated Jewish population in the former Soviet Union, which may be as large as 1 million people.

“We started celebrating Jewish holidays at home for the first time when our older son enrolled in this school 10 years ago,” says Lina, the mother of two sons. One son finished a Moscow Jewish day school several years ago, and the other is still in school.

“Over the years, this has become a family tradition in our house to celebrate the main Jewish holidays, of which my husband and I were hardly aware before,” she says.

Beyond that, say parents and Jewish communal leaders, is the fact that Jewish day schools help Jewish kids to build positive experiences of being Jewish, something their parents never had in the Soviet era.

“Their Jewish identity is something they take for granted, unlike the generation of their parents for whom being Jewish could often turn into a lifelong trauma,” says one Jewish educator in Ukraine who asked not to be identified.

Every Jewish school across the former Soviet Union offers a general studies component that is mandatory in its country. The general studies courses consume the lion’s share of class hours, leaving some eight to 10 hours a week for classes in Hebrew and Jewish history and tradition.

Many of the Jewish day schools enjoy the same status as municipal public schools, which entitles them to free use of school buildings, subsidized utilities and municipal salaries for general-studies teachers.

Many Chabad schools are coed institutions, unlike their counterparts in North America.

Through its Or Avner Foundation, Chabad runs about 60 percent of all Jewish day schools in the FSU and is the most dynamic organization in terms of investment in Jewish education in the region.

In fact, throughout the former Soviet Union, schools cater to the same type of Jewish population.

“There are simply no religious Jewish kids in the FSU,” says Rabbi Avraham Berkowitz, executive director of the Federation of Jewish Communities of the C.I.S., an umbrella group for Chabad-run activities in the region. “The only Jewish background kids here have is that they come from Jewish parents.”

World ORT is involved in 15 schools in the region, focusing on computer training and technological education to enable students to compete in the job market.

About half of the Jewish schools in the former Soviet Union — mostly non-Chabad schools — receive some support from the Israeli Ministry of Education and the Jewish Agency.

‘Most of our kids cannot get any Jewish education in their families or in the community.’
Grigoriy Lipman
 Moscow Jewish Day School No. 1311

TEACHING FOR THE FUTURE



Lev Krichevsky

Students at the Levi Yitzhak Schneerson School in Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine.

Non-Jews attend Jewish schools in ex-USSR

By LEV KRICHEVSKY

DNEPROPETROVSK, Ukraine (JTA) — In the principal's office of a Jewish day school in Dnepropetrovsk, a mother is fighting to hold back tears.

"You cannot turn my son down," says the woman, who came to register her teenage boy for school in this Ukrainian city. "He will be a good student."

Grigoriy Skorokhod, principal at the Levi Yitzhak Schneerson School — which, with 630 students, is the largest Jewish day school in the former Soviet Union — later says he had a hard time explaining to the woman why her son couldn't be accepted.

"She didn't make a secret that her family had no Jewish connection whatsoever," says Skorokhod, sitting under two portraits: one of Leonid Kuchma, Ukraine's president at the time, and the other of the late Lubavitcher rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson.

"But she says ours was a very good school, and another foreign language wouldn't hurt her son anyway," Skorokhod says. "Jews are caring parents and their education cannot be bad. That's what she and other parents like her think."

Most of the Jewish day schools in the former Soviet Union register exclusively or predominantly those children who are Jewish according to halachah, or Jewish law.

That's the official policy of all Chabad-run schools and schools that operate under the auspices of other Orthodox groups.

However, there is hardly a school in the area that doesn't have at least some non-Jewish students — not to mention children of mixed families who aren't halachically Jewish because their mothers are not Jewish.

Not all schools are ready to face the issue openly, so some parents try hard to conceal the fact that they have no connection to Judaism — a huge irony in a country where generations of Jews tried to hide their Jewishness in order to get ahead.

Some schools have opened their doors to non-Jewish students because they can't enroll enough Jews to fill their classrooms.

"Many schools, especially in the smaller communities, have begun accepting non-Jews, primarily because of the lack of Jewish children," says Hana Rotman, a leading expert on Jewish education in the former Soviet Union and head of the St. Petersburg-based New Jewish School research center.

The number of Jewish schools in the former Soviet Union has grown exponentially in recent years — but, as in other countries, most Jewish children attend public schools. There are now nearly 100 Jewish schools with approximately 15,000 students in the former Soviet Union.

Jewish educators across the region have become accustomed to the fact that most Jewish and mixed families still prefer to send their children to non-Jewish public or private schools.

"Many Jews prefer to stay away from anything Jewish," Dmitriy Tarnopolsky, Jewish community chairman in the Ukrainian city of Dneprodzerzhinsk, which has a Jewish day school operated by Chabad.

"They don't want to stick out, and there are plenty of mixed families with one non-Jewish parent against sending their child to a Jewish school," Tarnopolsky says.

The lack of Jewish kids is evident at Jewish Day School No. 41, a school for children in grades 1-11 in the western Ukrainian city of Chernovtsy — and the demographic situation, the result of a high rate of emigration and an aging community, isn't promising, principal Irina Savchuk says.

The 14-year-old school, one of the oldest in the former Soviet Union, receives municipal funding. As a result, it has to comply with government regulations that require a minimum number of children — often 25 — in each grade.

To meet that minimum and remain in operation, the school had to begin to accept non-Jewish students a few years ago.

Today at least one-third of the students are non-Jews, and the ratio is even higher in the primary school, Savchuk says.

Savchuk is not Jewish, although the principal she replaced a few years ago was.

In her school, all students are required to study Hebrew and Jewish history and tradition. Every boy is required to wear a yarmulke in classes on Jewish subjects.

"In our history lessons, non-Jewish students also say 'we' or 'our ancestors' when referring to the episodes from the Jewish past," says Savchuk, explaining that her



Lev Krichevsky

Students sit in class at a Jewish day school in St. Petersburg, Russia.

goal is to maintain the Jewish character of the school despite the community's declining Jewish population.

It was natural for Savchuk to become the principal of a Jewish school, she said. She had many Jewish friends as she grew up and then went to work in this city, which until recently had a large Jewish community. Most of the local Jews immigrated to the United States and Israel between the late 1970s and today. The 1989 census registered 16,500 Jews, while the 2001 census counted slightly fewer than 1,500.

Because the issue is touchy in some schools, some parents try hard to conceal the fact that they have no connection to Judaism.

In St. Petersburg, the mother of a primary-school student at a Chabad day school in St. Petersburg, which officially only accepts children who are halachically Jewish, asks that the family name not be used.

"Please don't write in your article that we are non-Jews. Write that we are real Jews," says Anna.

Anna says her family had no relation to Judaism, but that the Jewish school is the closest to her home.

Some Jewish educators believe the influx of non-Jewish students in Jewish schools may not be a bad thing.

"This is the result of some positive stereotypes about Jews that many non-Jews share," such as the Jewish value on education, Skorokhod says.

TEACHING
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Many schools
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Hana Rotman
New Jewish School

Religious organizations take financial stock

By CHANAN TIGAY

NEW YORK (JTA) — In the age of Enron and WorldCom, reported financial problems at an association of Reform rabbis and at the Conservative movement's flagship seminary might not get scandal-mongers' juices flowing.

But at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, at least, attention is being paid.

Although the RRC says it is now in the best financial shape of its nearly 40-year history, it has recently ordered a probe into its own finances. The probe is to be performed by the chair of an audit committee established at the institution last year.

The decision to initiate the audit does not reflect a concern that the institution's finances are troubled, officials say. Rather, it is an effort to demonstrate "maximum transparency" and was taken in direct response to media reports about the finances of the Central Conference of American Rabbis and the Jewish Theological Seminary, Rabbi Dan Ehrenkrantz, the RRC's president, told JTA.

"Given the news in the press having to do with other organizations' difficulties, we thought that it would be a good use of the chair of our audit committee to come and take an inventory of our present financial internal controls," Ehrenkrantz said.

Ehrenkrantz stressed that an independent auditor looks frequently at the school's finances. What's different about the latest move, he says, is that the audit committee chairman, unlike the indepen-

dent auditor, is a volunteer who is not paid by the RRC.

The audit comes as the Reform movement's rabbinic arm is making major budget cuts after discovering that it is missing \$1 million. Among the money-saving efforts, Rabbi Paul Menitoff, the group's executive vice president, has advanced his retirement by six months to help the group save money, and a search for a successor has been postponed.

Also, in December, news reports indicated that JTS was in debt and was selling off buildings and instituting a hiring freeze to cover loans. The institution's chief financial officer resigned in February after a little more than three months on the job — just three-plus months after the resignation of its controller.

JTS officials deny there is a hiring freeze, insist that its financial position "remains strong" and say that the CFO left to take a position in the entertainment industry.

Further, a spokeswoman for the school says JTS is audited on an annual basis by an outside company.

The CCAR's missing \$1 million was apparently taken from specially designated accounts by the group's former comptroller and used for other CCAR expenses. And although the CCAR believes the money was spent on legitimate CCAR expenses, an independent accountant has been hired to look into the matter.

"He's still in the process of going through the records to tell us how it took place and what we need to do, what controls we need to put in place in order to prevent it from ever happening again," said the CCAR's new president, Rabbi Harry Danziger.

Danziger said he hopes to receive a report on the situation by the group's board meeting in May in New York.

Jonathan Sarna, a professor of Jewish history at Brandeis University, said that the very public scandals that have rocked parts of the for-profit world have reverberated even within the walls of nonprofit institutions, reviving an old debate over the way these organizations allocate their money.

"I think that what we are seeing is a growing influence of ideas that really have grown up in the corporate sector," he said.

"Today we are increasingly seeing a view that demands much greater oversight over funding, a sense that money should only be used for very specific purposes. Rather than an instrumental view of money, it is a stewardship view."

The "old-style" instrumental approach, Sarna said, in which organizations could "borrow from Peter to pay Paul" and in

which accounting rules were viewed as "less important than the overall goal," is no longer seen as acceptable. The newer stewardship model, he added, "demands much greater oversight over funding."

"That instrumental view of money is simply not acceptable in an age when there have been so many scandals," he said.

Ehrenkrantz cites the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 — Congress's legislative effort to respond to the corporate scandals — as an inspiration for RRC's audit committee. Although the law doesn't regulate nonprofits, Ehrenkrantz said it can be viewed as containing "best practices" for such groups.

"The central item in Sarbanes-Oxley is the establishment of independent audit committees," he said. "This committee is able to ask questions of the auditor that might not otherwise get asked."

Rabbi Tzvi Hersh Weinreb, executive vice president of the Orthodox Union, says his group has been audited by an independent auditing firm semiannually for the last four years.

"We feel that we're doing all that we need to do," he said. "We're constantly reviewing our internal controls. We have a lay finance committee that is really on top of things."

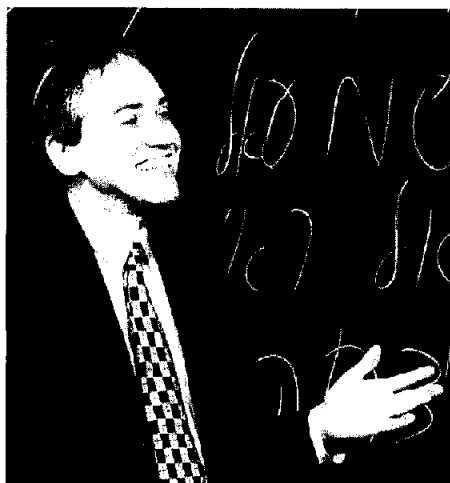
The Rabbinical Council of America, an association of centrist Orthodox rabbis, was audited by an outside firm two years ago and thereafter "put in place all kinds of safeguards and balances," said the group's executive vice president, Rabbi Basil Herring.

"We would certainly very much favor the highest standards of accountability and financial management," he said. ■

We would certainly very much favor the highest standards of accountability and financial management.

Rabbi Basil Herring
Rabbinical Council of America

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Courtesy of weisfeiler.com/boris

Reconstructionist Rabbinical College
President Rabbi Dan Ehrenkrantz teaches
in a classroom at the school.

ARTS & CULTURE

Iron Chef, meet Kosher Chef

By JORDANA ROTHSTEIN

NEW YORK (JTA) — Wearing a smock, a pinstriped apron and matching pants — and a large velvet yarmulka — Yochanan Lambiase clearly is not an ordinary chef.

The principal and chief patron of the Jerusalem School of Kosher Culinary Arts Lambiase comes from a family that had produced five generations of chefs. He knew his calling early on. In 1985, he began training as a chef at the Westminster Hotel School in his native England. After three years, he was apprenticed to Paul Bocuse, a renowned chef in Lille, France.

Lambiase didn't go to kosher cooking directly. He worked for many years at such hotels as the Ritz and the Savoy before being invited to cook for Schaverein Kosher Caterers in London.

Suddenly, cooking became "a different world to me. It was a challenge to come up with new recipes. I couldn't just throw butter in my sauces, or sprinkle cheese on my chicken."

After working for a while at the hall, Lambiase became more connected to Orthodox Judaism, eventually deciding to become fully observant.

Seeing how many kosher restaurants, food service providers and products there are, Lambiase began to wonder why there were no kosher culinary institutes where chefs could train.

To fill this void, Lambiase set up the first — and so far the only — kosher culinary school ever created. Established in January 2004 in Jerusalem, without the help of a donor and operating only on the tuition it collects, the school now meets in a hotel kitchen, although Lambiase hopes to be able to move to a more permanent home.

The school offers 10-month-long men's programs and five-month-long women's courses. The men's program is extended because it provides training in shechita, or ritual slaughter, and certification as mashgiachs, or kashrut supervisors. There are now 25 men and 15 women enrolled. ■

Remembering Saul Bellow

By JOHN J. CLAYTON

LEVERETT, Mass. (JTA) — It disturbed me to hear on U.S. public radio and read in *The New York Times* that Saul Bellow was to be seen as simply an American writer — which, of course, he is — and not significantly a Jewish writer.

Maybe they think they're doing him a favor? I think they're bleaching out a lot of the substance of Bellow, who died Tuesday at 89.

The *Times* quoted him as saying he had no wish to be part, along with Roth and Malamud, of the "Hart, Schaffner & Marx" of American letters. Well, who would? No good writer wants to be pigeonholed or limited in scope. But he is deeply a Jewish writer — not just a Jew by birth.

Jewish culture, Jewish sensibility, a Jewish sense of holiness in the everyday, permeate his work.

As a child, Bellow attended Jewish schools and grew up in a Jewish family, where he learned Hebrew thoroughly and spoke Yiddish as a primary language. It's a Yiddish that never went away.

Singer's "Gimpel the Fool" is read today in Bellow's great translation. Yiddish phrases and syntax are found in many of the novels. In "Herzog," the protagonist is snobbish about the Yiddish of his wife's lover.

But more important is a Yiddishkeit sensibility: never a schmaltzy echo of Sholem Aleichem, but a reliance on the Eastern European Jewish heart against which to measure life. I'm thinking, for example, of Schlossberg in "The Victim," the old Yiddish journalist who makes the beautiful speech that defines the moral vision of the book. It's a great speech and central to Bellow's vision.

Attacking those whose suspicions of human life turn it into something cheap and empty, Schlossberg says, "I am as sure about greatness and beauty as you are about black and white. If a human life is a great thing to me, it is a great thing. Do you know better? I'm entitled as much as you . . . Have dignity, you understand me? Choose dignity. Nobody knows enough to turn it down."

Bellow has said of the "Jewish feeling" within him that it resists the claims of 20th-century romanticism, the belief that man is finished and that the world will be destroyed.

The world in Bellow's fiction is, on the contrary, sanctified. The sanctification is often ironic, often in struggle against the neurotic patterns of characters and the foolish, vulgar, meretricious quality of contemporary life. Herzog, for instance, resists "the argument that scientific thought has put into disorder all considerations based on value. . . . The peculiar idea entered my (Jewish) mind that we'd see about this!"

Bellow has given us a rich Jewish-American world. But he has also given me as a writer a complex style, a way of handling contemporary reality, that he derived from both Jewish and American fiction.

Irving Howe quotes these famous lines from the great Yiddish writer Mendele Mocher Seforim: "Israel is the Diogenes of the nations; while his head towers in the heavens and is occupied with deep meditation concerning God and His wonders,

he himself lives in a barrel." But Bellow has added to this mixture the grace and rhythms of the art novel in English, such as those by Henry James and James Joyce, and the speech rhythms of American writers like Mark Twain. He has given us a new kind of sentence, composed of street talk and philosophy, mixing language of the heart and language of moneymen, marchers, American sports and con men.

This new sentence has been taken up by all American writers, Jewish and non-Jewish. If Israel is a blessing to the nations, Saul Bellow has been a Jewish blessing to all writers. ■

(John J. Clayton, a retired professor of modern literature and fiction writing at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, is an award-winning and widely published author of novels, short stories and literary criticism. His work "Saul Bellow: In Defense of Man" won awards in literary criticism. His collection "Radiance" was a finalist for the National Jewish Book Award in 1998.)

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NEWS IN BRIEF

WORLD

Pope's will mentions Italian rabbi

The former chief rabbi of Rome was one of just two living people mentioned by Pope John Paul II in his last will and testament.

Rabbi Elio Toaff, who hosted John Paul during the late pope's 1986 visit to a synagogue in Rome — the first time a pope had ever visited a synagogue — was singled out for thanks, the Jerusalem Post reported.

The other living person mentioned was John Paul II's longtime personal secretary, Stanislaw Dziwisz.

Nini honors pope

An Israeli singer will take part in an Italian television commemoration of Pope John Paul II.

Achinoam Nini will perform her version of "Ave Maria" during Friday's broadcast of the pontiff's funeral in the Vatican.

"Friends of mine from Italy called and said that 'Ave Maria' was being played all the time, and referred to it as the 'anthem of the funeral,'" Nini told Ma'ariv on Thursday.

"It is important for me that the Jewish people in general, and Israelis specifically, acknowledge the pope's work and always remember him well."

Nini gave John Paul a private performance in the Vatican in 2000.

Yahoo wins in France

A French court dismissed a case brought against Yahoo and its former director for the online sale of Nazi-themed memorabilia.

The court ruled that Timothy Koogle and Yahoo could not be held responsible for the information and representations placed on the site.

The case, accusing Yahoo of "apologies for crimes against humanity," was brought by two French human rights associations, the Association of Auschwitz Detainees and the Movement Against Racism.

In February 2003, similar charges in the United States against Koogle and Yahoo were dismissed.

Tunisian not guilty of terrorism, but jailed

A German court acquitted a Tunisian man of charges that he planned to bomb Jewish and American targets in Germany. But the court this week found Ishan Garnaoui guilty of tax and passport fraud and illegal weapons possession. He was sentenced to three years and nine months in prison.

Mbeki lauds new chief rabbi

South African President Thabo Mbeki saluted the country's new chief rabbi as a "true nation-builder."

Speaking at Warren Goldstein's inauguration this week, Mbeki said that "Rabbi Goldstein champions the very values which government would like to instill in our society. The Jewish community has always enriched the tapestry that is South Africa."

At 33, Goldstein is the youngest person to hold the office of chief rabbi in South Africa and the first rabbi born and educated in South Africa to hold the post.

MIDDLE EAST

Reform hopes to press conversion issue

The Reform movement in Israel is looking to return to the High Court to press for governmental acceptance of non-Orthodox conversions performed in Israel.

"We need to go back to the Supreme Court with cases that have only to do" with Israeli conversions, Rabbi Gilad Kariv, head of the

Public and Social Policy Department of the Reform movement's Israel Religious Action Center, said Thursday in a conference call with U.S. Reform leaders.

On March 31, the court ordered the state to recognize "leaping converts" — who study in Israeli institutes but convert with non-Orthodox rabbis abroad — as eligible for citizenship under the Law of Return.

Kariv was referring to instances where the conversion is carried out in the Jewish state rather than abroad.

Jews barred from Temple Mount

Israel barred Jews from the Temple Mount before a planned far-right rally.

Jerusalem police said Thursday that the ban would remain in place into next week, when the religious group Revava is expected to try to bring tens of thousands of Jews to the site.

Revava's request to hold a special prayer session on the mount was turned down amid concern that Jewish extremists could attack Muslim shrines there.

Ha'aretz reported that the Shin Bet had raised its assessment of the risk of violence on the mount.

Anti-withdrawal 'terror' concern

Israeli extremists are suspected of planting bogus bombs in Jerusalem in a bid to stop the Gaza Strip withdrawal.

Israeli police said Thursday that two members of the far-right group Kach had been arrested after witnesses saw them leave a backpack, with wires protruding to make it look like it contained explosives, at a major city square.

The suspects are believed to be linked to similar fake bombs planted outside Jerusalem's Great Synagogue and the Machane Yehuda market.

According to police, this could be a new tactic aimed at distracting security forces, who otherwise would be preparing to evacuate settlers from Gaza and the northern West Bank this summer.

NORTH AMERICA

Study: San Francisco Jews need more outreach

Jewish institutions in the San Francisco area should focus on increasing Jewish engagement among the unaffiliated rather than on fundraising, a new study says.

The community-wide scan of Jewish professionals in nearly 100 institutions was carried out by the New York-based Jewish Outreach Institute.

Sponsored by the Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund, it follows similar studies in Washington; Tucson, Ariz.; Columbus, Ohio; and Rochester, N.Y.

The Jewish population of the Bay Area has nearly doubled in 20 years, but the area still has low synagogue affiliation and high intermarriage rates compared to the rest of the country. The full report will be released April 20 in San Francisco.

YWCA USA objects to report

The YWCA USA distanced itself from a report funded by the World YMCA movement that compared Israelis to Nazis.

The group passed a resolution Saturday rejecting the report, called "Witness to Palestine."

The move came after an earlier vote condemning the report failed because the YWCA USA's board felt it needed further study.

The YWCA USA hopes to offer a more balanced resolution on the Middle East in 2007, the next time the World Council meets.